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The

Keys of the Kingdom

And Other Sermons

BY

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of The City Temple, London



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THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

I

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.”
—Matt. xvi., 9.

THERE has been for ages now a very great difference of opinion as to the meaning of this remarkable utterance of our Lord. You will remember that it forms part of a special address to the Apostle Peter, and that it only occurs once in the whole of the New Testament. It is recorded by St. Matthew, and by St. Matthew alone. The utterance was called forth by Peter's response to a question of our Lord, the question being, “Who say ye that I am?” And Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus then addressed him in a specially solemn way, singling him out, as it seemed, from the rest of the disciples. These were the terms of His address:

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“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven. I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Next come the words of our text:

“I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind in earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.”

You know, I suppose, how the Bishops of Rome interpret that particular text. The whole utterance they take to be the bestowal of a special commission on the Apostle Peter, and the giving to him of a certain primacy and a certain power of binding and loosing, in the life beyond as well as in this life. This special power they believe themselves to have inherited, as the successors of the Apostle in the bishopric of the Church of Rome. I pass by that particular interpretation, for our business now is not controversial, and it matters very little to us how this text is interpreted by the representatives of a great historic Church, to which, in one sense, at least, we cannot be said to belong. But I certainly think that it seems to give to Peter a certain primacy: a primacy, first, in the order of time. He was the first

who recognised, and, recognising, confessed that Christ was something more to him than an ordinary teacher could have been. In the expression, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," was contained the germ of all Peter's future experience. He knew God in a new way because he knew Christ. Peter, the Apostle, was *born* in the moment when he knew the Father in Christ. Further, I think it gives to Peter a special primacy in the order of leadership. Whatever we may say as to Peter's commission, we all agree that practically he did lead the Christian Church, for a certain period, at any rate. And he did it unwillingly, as we see from the last chapter of St. John's Gospel. He was more than willing that his brother Apostle, formerly his rival, now for ever his friend, John the Divine, should assume the leadership. But the words of Christ, addressed to him in his humility, admit of no misconception. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Tend My sheep: feed My lambs."

Now, agreeing as we all do, that in both these senses there is a certain significance to be attached to this commission, is there any other meaning to be read out of the text?

Our Lord's words are always full of spiritual

meaning, and when any of them are recorded you may be perfectly sure that the work of recording them was not waste of time—they have some relation to us as individuals. I think this text was a statement of Peter's own spiritual experience—that which was, and that which was to be; and the same truth which applied to this statement of Peter's own experience applies also to yours and mine. I will try to show you what I mean.

I went, in company with someone else, to see Mrs. Spurgeon's Home of Rest at East Brighton, and in giving to you a description of what one there saw, I am giving it through the mind of a little child. The little one was surprised as we entered into the hall. She had no idea the entrance was so grand. The house did not look anything very great outside. When we got into the vestibule, we saw that it was spacious, lofty, and beautiful. To some people that would have been a house by itself. However, we were not permitted to stay in the entrance hall. We were shown into another room on the ground floor, and though we had not forgotten the hall, in a few moments our interest was centred in the new room. From its windows we could see a certain part of the landscape and part of the sea, and we were

told that people were accustomed to sit or stand at the window and look out upon both. But we came out of that room and went into another, and, looking from the windows, we found that the view was more extensive and more beautiful. The windows faced the south, and the whole beauty of the Brighton front was laid open to us. We then ascended to another storey. The higher we went, the more we saw. We had not forgotten the entrance hall and the rooms on the ground floor, but all those were but experiences at the back of the mind; the higher we climbed, the larger grew our experience. We were led from room to room—each chamber, as it were, adding to our experience. You have applied the illustration, I doubt not, ere I have reached this point. It seems to me that God leads us from room to room, and every event of our life supplies us with a key with which we can unlock a new chamber of experience. There is nothing that is accidental—nothing that we can afford to say is unimportant. God is always delivering to us the keys of His kingdom. We are passing from experience to experience, from room to room—growing, developing, as we are able. God knows what is best for us, and as He calls us, so He shapes us.

Apply this to the life of the Apostle Peter, and you will see it to be true. When Peter made his famous affirmation, he had, as it were, just entered the vestibule of the kingdom of God. The discovery of God in Christ meant a great deal to him. He began a new life from that very moment: it had point and purpose which it had lacked before. He had been drawn to Christ—I suppose he could hardly have said why; he knew Christ now in a new and special way. In discovering Him, he discovered the Father—he entered the kingdom of God. For what is the kingdom of God? To appropriate the words of our Lord, “the kingdom of God is within you.” “Say not, Lo here! lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” It is the reign of God in the hearts of men. It is the reign of God, shall we say, amongst the nations of the earth, beginning with the individual always. We come to Him one by one; into the kingdom we pass one by one. We scarcely know, sometimes, when we have passed the threshold; but that self-discovery which is at the same time the discovery of our relationship to God, soon leaves us in no doubt where we are. When a man becomes a member of the kingdom of God, knows God as his Father,

and depends on Christ as his Saviour, he has passed, as it were, from death unto life; henceforth everything is new. Who opened the door? The Father, who supplies the key. God puts the key into the hands of each man by the particular event which leads him to God, and with that he enters into the kingdom, and passes from room to room in the experiences of the soul.

Shall we say that the Apostle Peter was forthwith perfect after he made his famous affirmation? Shall we say that you, my brethren, who have known Christ, are prepared to affirm to-day your likeness to Him? Are you what God means you to be? Are you what Christ would like you to be? Are you what you feel you ought to be? There is no one amongst us who can say that. We are passing from room to room—ascending from storey to storey, from experience to experience—looking out from each new room upon the meaning of life, learning as we ascend. There is no accident in all this. God leads us from crisis to crisis—each crisis with its lesson, each lesson with its key.

In Peter's life I see three great crises. Let us for our instruction give a few minutes to each.

1. The crisis of a great love.
2. The crisis of a great moral failure.
3. (The immediate sequence of the second)
The crisis of a great sorrow.

1. *The crisis of a great love.*—No one doubts Peter's love for Christ; Christ never did. He loved his Master, and the very fact that he could love changed him. We are like him. You are very poor if no great love has ever come into your life. You are the better if you have ever given yourself in love to any one. One has sometimes heard people mourn that they ever had committed themselves to a great love, because some of those to whom you give the most give to you in return the least. And you wish that it were not so; you wish to excise the experience, not only that of ingratitude, but that of the bond of affection which united you with the loved one. Never wish that again. What you are to-day you are in great measure because you have learned to love. Do you regret that you ever committed yourself so far as to rob yourself of luxury and ease and pleasure because of that child who has not turned out all that you could wish? Believe me, the chapter has not closed yet by any means, but something of its meaning you can read already. What difference

has it made to you? You are wiser, kinder, nobler, sweeter. It is a great thing to have loved. "Say never, ye 'loved once.'" The experience is built into your soul. God supplied you with a key to the meaning of life when He made you capable of loving somebody. Never wish the experience undone; it has helped to make you. Think of any one who is incapable of such an affection. How much of life such natures miss! They remain in the lower storeys; there is a vast landscape hidden from them. They are able to mount higher just in proportion as they are able to give themselves to an ideal. A great love transformed Peter; the power of love may transform you.

2. *The crisis of a great moral failure.*—Then there came a great failure. From some points of view the most interesting crisis of Peter's life was when he failed his Master through cowardice. No one would care to affirm that Peter did not love the Lord whom he denied; but Jesus knew he would deny Him, because He knew Peter. Peter did not know himself; and I affirm that he was a better man immediately after the act of denial than he was at the moment when he promised his Master that he would never deny Him.

We judge amiss so often because we judge moral offence by deed rather than by disposition. It is possible that you and I were worse men, worse women, in hours when we saw nothing wrong with ourselves than we were in those hours of self-contempt that followed failure. If there be a man in this congregation this morning who is conscious of being a moral failure, I would like to speak to that man. You are in great danger, greater than you know. You are also in a region of blessedness greater than you know. Do you blame yourself for sin? It is not the deed that you call sin that is the greatest sin. It was your spirit before you felt that was wrong. The deed only revealed yourself to yourself. You were a failure before you knew yourself. You are in the region of blessedness now if you will but have it so. There are some people who cannot recover themselves from self-contempt. No man merits contempt, not even from himself. That which happened to you was, that God, who knew you better than you knew yourself, withdrew His hand for a moment. You fell—that you might rise again. There was tenderness in the act of God in permitting you to know yourself by the deed that you call sin, but which might be, if you allow it, your

salvation. It is difficult to bear the cross of moral failure. The valley of humiliation is not a welcome place. The discipline of failure is necessary often for the shaping of a holy life. Read the meaning: take the key into your hand. The kingdom of God means the reign of God in your heart, and this truth concerns you at this moment more than it concerns any one else in the world. Never mind what any other person's relation to God may be till you have adjusted your own. Say unto that which has overthrown you, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! When I fall, I shall arise." It is the will of God that through moral failure you should be supplied with a key to regions that lie higher than all you have yet known.

3. *The crisis of a great sorrow.*—Peter's third experience was that of a great sorrow. Would any of you wish to change places with him after that terrible day when Christ was crucified, and when, so far as Peter knew, He was gone from him for ever. How he must have reproached himself, condemned himself, that he was not braver in the day of his Master's tribulation! He had forsaken Him to whom he had promised loyalty and affection—and Jesus was dead! Peter is not the only

person who has felt like that. It must be a terrible thing for some people to look back across an open grave and see what might have been. And how possible it is to wish remorsefully but vainly that those who are gone could come back again for a moment, that they might see what the state of our heart toward them really is, and hear our word of contrition and self-reproach. But it cannot be. They cannot return, and we—we shall be marked for ever by *that* cross, that we cannot undo for the dead that which we have done, and we cannot do for the dead that which we have left undone. Truly that is a great sorrow, a sorrow for which there is no panacea. *Is* there no panacea? There is just the same panacea that there was for Peter. Look for the meaning of the experience: there is a key there. The kingdom of God extends to both earth and Heaven. What you are resolving now for the kingdom of Heaven's sake is changing you while you resolve it. You are leaving behind you somewhat now for the kingdom of Heaven's sake: you are changing as you leave it. You are shaping yourself for eternity. The binding and the loosing is going on. In Heaven there is some record of your doings. Christ is the medium between you and all whom you have

ever wronged. We have wronged Him most in wronging any. But God never meant a man to become the victim of his own sins. The self-discovery which a great sorrow makes necessary supplies us with a new key to the kingdom of God. We pass into a new chamber, take a new view of life, and all that happens to us henceforth stands in some relation to the experience which has passed, as well as to that which is to come. To you are committed the keys of the kingdom of God—not all together, but one by one, as Christ committed them to Peter.

Some of you have been called to pass through deep waters; and just for the moment you may be wondering where God is, and why He has left you so poor. Life seemed rich but a few days ago; it is very sad and dreary now. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." My brother, my sister, God has given you a key to the kingdom of Heaven. He has led you into a new room, and bidden you look out upon life from a new point. The change that is taking place in you may be blessed—shall be, if you let it be; remembering that the kingdom of God is not only for earth, but for Heaven—not only for time, but for eternity. This is a moment; there is a

by-and-by, a gathering up of all things into Christ. Learn to use the key that God has given you; and by a great sorrow rise nearer to Him.

In the hills around Brighton you may read the history of the world. So in every man's character you can read the history of mankind. No one can cross the Downs without noticing that something has been there which has helped to make that which now is. Once upon a time the sea washed round the foot of those cliffs that we call the Dyke. This Brighton of ours was once covered deeply with ice and snow that never removed, summer or winter; there has also been a time when the rocks round about us were melted by fervent heat, and if you care to read the story of the crust of this little world of ours you will see it written in the cliffs—layer upon layer. In every blade of grass there is latent the story of the whole; little by little it has been so made. In every man's character there is latent every experience through which he has passed. Your memory may not be strong enough to take you back to those hours when God was chiselling and fashioning you for the mood of this moment; but no matter how weak your memory is, the experience is there; and however much you

may wish it you cannot undo it without undoing what you are. Latent in us all there are these experiences, which in God's providence succeed each other, and leave us the same no more. Appropriate this thought. It brings great comfort with it. We are not alone; we are not ignored; we are not left to ourselves. We are led from room to room. God calls us to the kingdom; and when we have passed inside the door the keys of the rooms through which we pass are given to us one by one, and "Christ leads us through no darker rooms than He went through before."

II

SIN-BEARING

“ He was manifested to take away our sins.”

—I. John iii., 5.

“ It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see him as He is.”—I. John iii., 2.

LET us, first of all, read these two verses in the Revised Version. They run thus: “ We know that He was manifested to take away sins; and in Him is no sin.” (Marginal rendering: “ *bear sins.*”) “ It doth not yet appear what we shall be; we know that if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him.” (Marginal rendering: “ if *it* shall be manifested.”)

Let us now take these two sentences in conjunction, and paraphrase them into their meaning in modern English. In the fifth verse we read: “ He was shown forth to the world ”—in His birth, life, death, resurrection, and His abiding influence in the hearts and lives of men to-day—“ to take away sins ”—or, to bear

sins—"and in Him there is no sin." The second verse might read thus: "Beloved, we are now sons of God, and it is not yet clear what we shall be; but we know that when it is made clear"—(not "when *He* shall appear")—when it is shown forth, when it is clear to us what we are intended to be—"we shall see we are like Him." Now, put the two sentences together and read: "We shall be like Him in bearing sins."

There is a dual meaning attached to one word in the fifth verse, which is translated in the Old Version by the phrase "take away." But it has another meaning as well. The meaning is simply "endure," "bear," "carry," and this dual meaning ought to be present in our minds when we study the sentence before us. For it suggests two thoughts. The first is that there is a work of Christ in relation to sin in which we cannot share; but the second is that there is a work of Christ in relation to sin that we are *called* to share. Christ has a relationship to the world which no single individual amongst us can have; but likewise Christ, in redeeming the world, makes use of every life that is consecrated to Himself.

Let us consider these meanings. The most

important part of the message which Christ brought to the world, the most important part of the message which Christ delivers to the world to-day, is addressed to the conscience first, and afterwards to the reason and to the heart. Our Lord's earthly ministry began with one word: "Repent." Then came the promise: "The kingdom of God is at hand." Put into homely language it is: "Come to God—turn to God; for God has come to you." It has always seemed to me that the message to the conscience which Christ delivered created a kind of obligation on His part to satisfy the need that He then awakened. For, once we have prevailed upon a man to sue for pardon at the feet of the Eternal One, we have, as it seems, stated at the same time our obligation to present to him the satisfaction of his need; and it has always appeared to those who have come nearest to Christ that in discovering man to himself, in awakening within him the consciousness of a need of a Redeemer, He at the same moment declares His own obligation to supply the answer to that need in the bearing of sin. Many have never entered very deeply into this aspect of truth, but some have, and to them I repeat the message of the Gospel: "He was manifested to take away sins;"

and if you choose to insert the epithet of the old translators you may—" *our* sins." The responsibility for the better life that is before us, and which the consciousness of guilt might hinder us from ever attempting, rests with Jesus Christ. It was never meant that a man should become the victim of his own sins, so that he could not rise to the heights of holiness; and this glorious Gospel, which bears upon the face of it the vindication of its own genuineness, in that it satisfies the need it awakens, comes to the world to-day as the message of a Redeemer who came to bear away our sins.

Not to dwell longer upon this general point, let me mention one apparent qualification. It is that Christ, in bearing away sins, has not removed, or seems not to have removed, the penal consequences of sin. We are all aware that there is no forgiveness in Nature; very seldom is there forgiveness in human nature. No man sees all the meaning of his deeds before he commits them; but, once committed, it seems as though they had become part of the history of the universe, and the consequences are inexorable.

To take a gross instance. Suppose that a man has abandoned himself to the craving for strong drink in such wise that he has wrecked

his body, blunted his finer sensibilities of soul. What does forgiveness include for that man? Why, it means introducing him to a new hell, of which even in his sins he had known nothing. If you could succeed in inducing him to believe that there is a pardoning God, and that there is such a thing as the grace of God, you have but brought him face to face with a new struggle. Not a pang is spared him. The craving remains what it was before, with the exception that it is a daily humiliation to fight down the beast within him. He might say to himself that he is but bearing the consequences of his own sin, that there is no one to blame but himself, and that the Gospel never provided such an emancipation in this life as he would like to have—the emancipation from temptation.

But this is not so. There is another way of looking at the spiritual significance of what seems to be the consequence of our sins. Remove the word *penal* altogether from what a soul endures that is being cleansed from the presence of sin, and put in its place the word *discipline*, and then think if before God we are not all alike. You who, for the most part, have been trying all your life to serve God, and whose progress has been an increasing knowl-

edge of Him, whose joy in communing with Him is without disguise, and who have a witness that you are in very deed the sons of God—you know, do you not?—that the way has not been altogether a way freed from obstacles, and difficulties, and conflicts, and agony of spirit. Holiness is always purchased by these things; and, if you have never fallen as your brother has fallen, all the same this sharp lesson of life has been yours. You have been disciplined into what you are. Your nature has been deepened, your heart has been made tender, your outlook upon life far more solemn, by the things that have come to you unsought and unwelcomed, and that you have prayed to God in agony of spirit to take away from you.

Now, turn to the poor drunkard and say your message over again. Say: "Brother, I have my discipline; you have yours. I have my struggle: God has given you yours. Remember, with thankfulness, that you have been digged out of a very deep pit indeed, and continue your struggle now, not as the consequence of the past, but as the discipline which God permits you for the perfecting of your soul in the present and the future. Your *sin* has been borne away long ago. Yours is the discipline which comes to us all, and that it is so sharp

and so strong is a mark, not of God's anger, but of His favour, for 'whom He loveth, He chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.' "

But, to proceed to the secondary meaning of our text:—"He was manifested to bear sins." If you will turn to St. John i., 29, you will read a sentence that reminds you of this one, and, in fact, it is closer in meaning to it than you would at first imagine. "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Now here the word is just the same as in our text. It is simply "bear;" the weight is laid upon Him. "The chastisement of our sins was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

There is an aspect of the work of Christ in which every regenerate soul is called to share. Here are some ways in which we can apply this truth to our souls.

First, let us recognise that there is no man who is able to bear his own sins. A very familiar mode of expression in the present day is to this effect: It is right for a man to have to bear the consequences of what he has brought upon himself by his own wickedness. A case is before my mind at the moment, which I may venture to give you, as an abstraction rarely

helps, while a concrete illustration does. I remember long ago being brought face to face with a most pitiful case of ruin at the beginning of manhood. A young man had fallen into bad habits, and, by the influence of others, had become a victim to the gambling mania. He had gone so far as to tamper with his employer's money. Then the question for his friends was, what was to be done? One of his friends said (and, I think, charitably), that the best thing to be done was to leave him to the consequences of his own folly. It was then asked what the consequences would be, and the reply was that it was to be feared that they would mean imprisonment, and, for the present at any rate, ruin in the eyes of his circle of friends. When it was asked why it was considered desirable that the culprit should suffer so much, the reply given was that it was because he did not see his own responsibility as he should, and he was not ashamed of his sin, but merely afraid of exposure: his spirit was wrong. Well, as things have turned out, that friend was right. The spirit of the culprit was wrong; it was simply cowardly. He managed to shun for the moment the awkward consequences of his own behaviour; he did not have to endure the exposure, nor, what

would have mattered very much less, the actual imprisonment; but I do not think he was cured. But if he had been disgraced in the eyes of society, the wife and child would have been ruined as well as he, for they, who were totally innocent and ignorant of it all, would have been disgraced for evermore, and the poor little one would have entered into life sadly handicapped. Could it be said that, in allowing that man to endure the penalty of his sin, he was expiating it by himself? By no means. No man sinneth to himself.

To take yet another truth. I should say that behind every case of moral failure there is a responsibility which cannot be placed upon the right shoulders by anyone but God. When I hear of a man having fallen, I am tempted to inquire how many persons have contributed to that fall; and, perhaps, if we were able to trace the matter to its original sources, it would be found that some who are most earnest in serving God, and most anxious for His glory, are included in the number of those who are responsible. Have you ever been conscious that you were doing harm to someone by the very flippancy of your demeanour—by your off-hand behaviour in a certain crisis of his career? What seemed to be your life was on

the surface—the careless, or cynical, or worldly, or censorious side of your character—and by it you injured the moral susceptibilities of another who stood near you, and into the fabric of his responsibility entered a part of yours. There is no man that falleth by himself. There are a thousand agencies that have contributed to make him what he is when the crisis comes; and none of us who know ourselves truly would dare to point the finger of scorn. Perhaps by what we have been and done, and by what we have *not* been and done, we have contributed to the fall of a brother, who, in the sight of God, has not fallen alone. No man should bear the full responsibility for his own sins.

But, on the other hand, we have to fall back upon the great promise that He who is the Life of the world, the Fount of all compassion, is sufficient for these things, and we are not. It is not the province of the preacher to explain *how*, but simply to say that so it is. Happily for us who feel ourselves to be guilty in the sight of God for other men's failures, there is a compensation to be found—not in human nature, but in the Divine that is human—Jesus Christ our Saviour.

There are yet other instances in which we

share with the Sin-bearer. Let me give you one or two that are apparent to all, and then leave you to apply the truth yourselves to cases that are not so apparent. Do you remember the dying words of Savonarola, who paid with his life the penalty of his magnificent attempt to establish the City of God in wicked Florence? One day he was addressing a crowd in the Duomo; another day he was led in disgrace to the stake, amid the hoots of those who had been hanging upon his words but a little time before. George Eliot put into his mouth words that give the experience of every true martyr, whether he be crucified before the gaze of mankind or in silence and shadow: "*I count as nothing; darkness encompasses me; yet the light I saw was the true light.*" Reinzi, the last of the Roman tribunes, at the last moment would have saved himself from the fury of the rabble. He recognised in the hour of his failure that he who would serve must suffer, and that sometimes it seems as though the service were not worth while. "I am greater than Rome," he said, as he fell a victim to the people he had saved. Martin Luther, in his grand affirmation, "Here stand I: I can none other: so help me God!" understood what it was to suffer vicariously. He

was bearing a burden not his own. God saved him, but he knew what it was even in life to be crucified; for those who get beneath the triumph of the great reformer discern at what a soul agony it was purchased. Latimer, at the stake in Oxford, declared the same truth: "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley! We shall this day, by the grace of God, light such a candle in England as shall never be put out." The suffering servant of God was bearing sins not his own. The accumulation of the guilt of the world seems to fall upon these royal ones who live and serve in the spirit of Christ. So it always has been; so it always will be. The sin-bearers of the world, the saviours of the world, are joined in spirit unto Him who agonised in Gethsemane and died upon Calvary.

Now, to pass from these dramatic scenes of history to our more common life. Some of you, not very willingly it may be, are sin-bearers. I think of you, a husband, who have to bear the frailties of a wife whom you took for better or for worse. You bear the burden and you say nothing about it; you are the braver and the truer and the nobler for it. I think of the wife who appears not in public service, but who is the strength of the husband who

does; who sacrifices herself every day with cheerfulness of spirit to brace him for the stern conflict, and knows what it is, perhaps, to keep to herself a certain sorrow that has made her what she is. Every power for good is purchased by soul agony. Where wrong has been done to you; where you have been misunderstood; where you have been wounded in spirit; where your deserts have been ignored by the world that is round about you—learn your lesson. So it always has been; and we shall be like Him when we see Him as He is. You are accounted fortunate, perhaps, that there are so many who carry your burden; and yet you carry not only your own, but others'. Sometimes you feel rebellious; you wish it could be otherwise—that it were possible for the truth about your life to become known to men, who would then interpret you better. Never wish it any more. It is just as it should be; and when the purpose of it all shall appear, we shall see that we are like Him—sin-bearers.

Every tragedy in the home circle, every hour of agony through which you pass, every wrong that you must endure in silence—for there is no redress upon this side of the grave—is not purposeless or accidental. It is a great privi-

lege to which you are called—the high prerogative of suffering. Some day we shall see the meaning of it all, and never regret a moment of it. You remember the incident in “Middlemarch,” of that leader of society—part of it religious society—who had obtained his worldly success by a means that he dare not own. He had been the ruin of a poor old widow woman. Her gold became his: the whole fabric of his after influence was built upon a crime. The day of exposure came—it had to come—and on that day his wife uttered no word of reproach, nor was she vehement in his defence, nor did she torture him by telling him what she meant to do. She left the room, and came back without any of her rich robes, dressed in plain and simple black, as befitted a new condition. She said in demeanour that was stronger than speech: “I have come to share your shame.” Up to that time he was not sure whether she could stand by him; but that one act broke him down: she was bearing his sin. In daily life we find such opportunities still. Whether it be in secret trial or in open shame, it is our privilege to be sin-bearers. Christ summons us to a fellowship holy and august. Shall we shrink from the trial? May

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we all live so that when at last the day of
revelation comes, we may be of the

Choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence.

III

THE SELF-REVELATION OF JESUS

John i., 35-51.

A LITTLE time ago a well-known preacher, declaring his own experience and doing his best to move his hearers to a more solemn apprehension of spiritual truth, said, "It is not the preaching of Christ, not eloquence, not earnestness, not spiritual experience, not even the living of a good life, that brings men to a saving knowledge of Christ—it is Christ Himself." The statement arrested me at once, because I felt that, though it might be somewhat exaggerated, yet it was the basal truth upon which all spiritual life exists—the self-revelation of Jesus.

The great need of to-day is that of a near vision of Jesus. The longer I live the more am I convinced that men do want to see Jesus. They do not want many propositions about

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Christianity, except those propositions about God which are to be found in our experience of Christ. When we seek spiritual satisfaction, each of us along the line of our own needs and expressing our own nature, we are seeking really for a revelation of Jesus. It is very remarkable that this should be so, in our own day especially, because it shows how completely victorious is the spiritual nature of man over every other part of his nature. Every assertion of the highest in us is an appeal for Jesus.

When we compare our own day with what have been called (I know not with how much exactness) the ages of faith, we are struck, in spite of outward differences, with the similarity of the experience of Christ which prevailed then and prevails now. When you are reading the pages of Thomas à Kempis you feel yourself in some degree in another world, an entirely new environment, but the experience that lies at the back of it, the experience of Christ, is precisely the same as that of any saint of God in this place to-day; the reverent familiarity with Jesus which was the note and characteristic of the ages of faith is reproduced now, and where it is not reproduced it is sought

after as much as in the days of Thomas à Kempis. The great need of the present day is to bring men back to Jesus. Let me ask you, then, to revise what you already know of the process that has given us Jesus.

It is not so very many years ago that Christ was, so to speak, rediscovered—not the Christ of faith, but the Jesus of actual history. The ecclesiastical Christ has nearly disappeared. There was a time in the history of the Church when Jesus was lost sight of because the Second Person in the Trinity occupied a place so conspicuous. And then came a tendency, which is now, I think, spending itself, to rediscover the actual Christ as He lived and walked and talked in the days of His flesh; and as Dr. Fairbairn has said very pithily, though that rediscovery of Jesus meant for us a new beginning in many ways, it cannot add anything to our actual experience of the Christ of faith. We have come very near to the historical Jesus; we see Him now as He seemed to the fishermen of Galilee; we recognise His winsomeness, His tenderness, His compelling power, His authority; but we know no more really of the spiritual loveliness of Christ than St. Bernard or St. Francis of Assisi. Christ has for us, as He had for them, the religious value

of God. We identify Him with the best that we know of the Divine nature. He is the satisfaction of our souls at their highest; He can deal with human misery and weakness and pain. We ask to-day, as they asked in the long ago, "Let us see Jesus."

Then, how are we to obtain any clearer vision of Jesus? The thought may be shaping itself in your mind while I speak, "By going straight to the Holy Book." Here He is mirrored for us. No one going to the New Testament for the first time could be other than arrested by the picture that its pages present of the Jesus of history. Nothing precisely like Him has ever been seen. His uniqueness is demonstrated by our increasing knowledge of what He did in the days of His flesh. But do you think that we go to the Bible for our first-hand knowledge of Christ? I am not prepared to say that it could not be so, but I think I am right in saying that I have never found it to be so. Our knowledge of Christ is not a book knowledge. The Bible, giving it the utmost prominence that you can, and the greatest reverence, does not bring you to Christ. It feeds your nature when you have found Him; it supplements your spiritual experience as you grow like Him; but you do not

go to Christ, the greater number of you, by the medium of Holy Scripture; there is something else, a something which I shall try to demonstrate to you.

A returned missionary tells a story of a Hindu convert whom he discovered living by himself where few white men ever passed. It appeared that this man had come into possession of a copy of the New Testament. The Jesus of the Gospels attracted him; he became a Christian without knowing what the name Christian really meant—that is to say, he did not call himself a Christian; he simply came to believe in Christ. He retired from the society of his fellows—in fact, he was expelled; he lived quietly and humbly in a hut in the forest by himself, feeding his spiritual life by what he got from the Gospels and nothing else. The story was exceedingly simple. The Jesus of the Gospels had won his attention. “I assured him,” said the missionary, “of what Jesus had been to me. Before I left him I tried to make him understand the present Christ rather than the Christ of the past who gave to us a new vision of God. I revealed to him out of my own spiritual stores what I knew of my own Saviour, and that man was not only confirmed in his faith, but rose to a new spiritual

level through what he learned from my experience of the living Christ." Great as was the arresting power of what that Hindu found in the Gospels, it took another altitude when he discovered the living Christ, revealed first in the experience of another, and then in the witness within.

Would you say, then, that we come to Christ from what we see of Him in the lives and the experience of other men? Is it sufficient to live the good life? It has its value. You remember the story of the young man who was sent to John Keble to learn Catholic truth, as it was called? He was a man who would not have been convinced by Keble's arguments, though the person who sent him to Keble sent him as to a Christian apologist. Keble was silent, he simply lived; and before that man left his company he was not only a Christian, but an Anglo-Catholic. He left behind him all the questions he had brought: Keble's life was the greatest apologetic he had ever read. I do not think that it would make me an Anglo-Catholic, but it might bring me to Christ. The witness of a good life is a great thing, but it does not meet the whole range of experience. Tauler, the author of the *Theologica Germanica*, says somewhere that sometimes the best of

men mistake the best of men. That is true, and I think it is in the good purpose of God that it should be so; that God may be sufficient for the best that is in man, that He should be our closest Friend, our real Guide, our Strength, our Sustainer. God Himself is the compensation for human misunderstanding. A strange thing it is that by our very limitations we withhold from one another that sympathy and respect without which it might be supposed spiritual life could not be sustained. And the power of a good life is not always manifest. Goodness is usually its own vindication, but not always, for holiness is not invariably self-evident. We cannot live absolutely and entirely so as to be certain of witnessing for Christ.

From these considerations, we come very naturally to the record that we have of the manifestations of Jesus in this first chapter of St. John's Gospel. The first to announce Him was John the Baptist, His forerunner and herald. He declared, without stopping to prove, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" to all those who heard him; to all those who had followed him in the hope of getting a glimpse into a higher and a nobler life—just as you and I do to-day: we

listen to anyone who can open the kingdom of Heaven. And two of those who heard him turned and followed Jesus. "What seek ye?" said the seeming peasant of Galilee. "Master," was the reply, "where dwellest Thou?" "Come and see," was the answer, and they abode with Him that same night. Next day they separated—the one of them is Andrew, the other is clearly John, though he does not say so—each to bear his witness to the new discovery. First, Andrew findeth his own brother, Simon, and saith unto him, "We have found the Messiah." Peter came to Jesus. Mark, the declaration is in every case the same; the introduction is pretty much the same; but the way in which Jesus deals with every separate one is in every single case different. Peter came, and Jesus, looking into his nature, said, "You, the impulsive, the wayward, the unsteady, the victim of your own moods; you, the weak and unreliable, shall be called a rock." Peter's secret thought was penetrated there. It was what he wanted to be, and Christ understood him, and he accepted Christ. He would need no more witness of Andrew or James. He had found the Messiah; the Person who understood him, and answered him along the line of his own need. And the most

interesting case of all, perhaps, was that of the introduction of Nathanael. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, "We have found the Messiah." Nathanael, the contemplative, the retired, the spiritually-minded, asks him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip's answer is, "Come and see!" He spent no time in demonstrating—he declared. And at our Lord's first words, Nathanael asks, "Whence knowest Thou me?" not heartily, I am sure, but questioningly. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." What was the reason of Nathanael's response to that reply, "Thou *art* the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel?" I will tell you. It was because of what Jesus suggested rather than what Jesus said. Nathanael was instantly aware that the witness of Philip had been preceded by the summons of Jesus, for Philip did not know what Nathanael was doing under the fig-tree. He was praying doubtless. "Under the fig-tree," simply means the home. This Israelite was praying at home for the vision of God which was granted to him in the Messiah. Jesus penetrated his secret thoughts just as He had penetrated the thoughts of Peter. The ambassador was forgotten; Philip stood on one

side, and Nathanael felt himself answered. "Before that Philip called thee—when thou wast praying in the secret place, *I* saw thee. Thou shalt see greater things than these. Thou shalt see heaven open. This is but the vestibule of a great experience. Thou shalt see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." What took place from this time forth between Nathanael and Jesus we do not know. He appears in the last chapter of St. John's Gospel as he appears in the first. He never was very far away from the side of the Teacher. He had found Him, and in finding Him had a new vision of God. He had found Him, and in a degree had found himself. He had found Jesus by Jesus' own self-revelation, just as we have to find Jesus in these days too.

And now to develop that thought by way of application.

Let me say then, in the first place, to those who are thinking of this great subject: recognise Christ as present in your desire for Christ. Everything that has hitherto gone before in your acquaintance with Christ is just a witness and a testimony. There is the witness of good lives, and then the witness of declared truth, which may be the Holy Book. But all these

things are as nothing compared with your own desire for Christ. Why is it that you thrill and respond when you hear a spiritual truth that you appropriate for yourself? Because it was applied to your soul, not by the preacher, but by the Lord. Many a man has taken out of a sermon what was never put into it. God does not always take His ambassadors into His confidence. Many a person has been conscious of a craving for God, and come to the person that he thought could understand him, but the second message was not like the first. What was the reason? Because God was in the first, speaking to your heart without telling the ambassador anything about it. Christ declares Himself in your own desire, in your craving for Him. Think of the apologetic value of a man's desire for God. Nearly every person who has ever spoken to me about Christ wanted Christ, not because of any immediate advantage, but to be at rest, to be at home, and to be right. Christ holds the secret of all things, and that is why sinful and suffering men and women come to Him in these days as they came in the days of His flesh.

But, further, Christ is revealed in the appeal to Himself. We appeal too much to other men's witness of Him. We find him frequent-

ly in our withdrawal from the witness of men. Cannot you think—those of you whose knowledge of Him is very slender, but whose desire for Him is very great—that Christ deals with you individually, just as He dealt with Peter and Philip and Nathanael, and that no person can really help you beyond the threshold of the kingdom of God? You must find Him for yourself—heart to heart, face to face; for Christ reveals Himself in the appeal direct to Christ. That effort and act of faith is worth the while of any man. Speak to Jesus Himself; He is the author of everything that is best in you; He preaches His own sermons, takes His own texts, answers His own questions. Christ knows what is in man; and you, who are already His own, are present in His heart.

And, again, Christ is witnessed in your own peculiar need. Nothing is more common than the habit in which we seem to take for granted that our way of looking at spiritual truth is the way in which every other man will. Every preacher, I suppose, receives a vast amount of theological advice, and it is always on the line of individual experience. The amateur theologian says, “Why don’t you preach the Gospel in such a way? This and that declaration of

Christ is sufficient in itself." But those who know better recognise, as Dr. Robertson Nicoll says, the tremendous difficulty as well as simplicity of believing. Doctors say that every case of sickness is different from every other, and that when they know their profession best they theorise least and observe most. In spiritual things we are all different, because God has made us so, and when we answer to the Divine call within ourselves, we begin to climb the steps guided by the hand of Christ alone. Christ is witnessed in our own individual, peculiar needs. There is a great deal of pseudo-spirituality in the world, a kind of craving for God which rises no higher than a feeble desire for friendship and converse with the Strongest. "The bruised reed will He not break, and smoking flax will He not quench." If the feeling is no higher than that, perhaps it is enough for Jesus. We have found the Friend that comforteth, the Saviour, the satisfaction of our souls. Try Him along that line of your own needs. Appeal to the Christ Himself, and not to all our witness of Christ. If the way to peace is to be simple and easy for you, He will make it so, for we cannot.

One of the great dangers of the spiritual life is mental vagueness; and one of the great dan-

gers of the mental life is spiritual apathy. Give way to neither, but let your own need witness, and leave to Jesus the task of saving you. For my experience teaches me that it is well to leave to God more and more to do, and to men less and less. God can do for you just what you need should be done. If it is not possible to take hold by faith, it is possible to ask for the faith to take hold. Every obstacle of which you are conscious, and which other men do not see at all, will be removed—not by what somebody tells you, but by what God does for you. Recognise that there must be a solution of every difficulty of which every man is conscious; that it is no delusion to believe that some have stood on the heights with God. And if the obstacles are taken away that seem so insuperable to you, they will be removed by the power of the Holy Ghost, witnessing for the Christ already in your heart. Jesus is already speaking with you. Seek for Him in your own heart and you will find Him there.

IV

THE PROMISE OF THE COMFORTER

“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know Him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you.”—John xiv., 15-18.

THERE are many ways in which men think and speak of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. For instance, some persons of a certain mental training cannot think of God at all without thinking of Him somewhat in the terms that have become familiar to Christian thought, as the Trinity in Unity, the society in unity, or, as the Shorter Catechism has it, “There are three Persons in one God; the same in substance, equal in power and glory.” Not many people, however, I should suppose, think of the Holy Spirit in this way, as the third Person in the Trinity, or are ever troubled about the difficulty of thinking of the Divine

Being as lonely, impassive, far away ; One who cannot contain within Himself the relations which, so far as we know, go to make life perfect. We think of the Holy Spirit far less as a necessity of thought than as an emanation of God. Nevertheless, we will leave for the moment the statement of the creed of Christendom, and come to the promise of the Spirit as we have it in the words of our text.

In the verse before us we have the Holy Spirit promised as the Comforter, or the Paraclete. Let us consider the promise clause by clause.

“ I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.” The word used here for “ pray ” is not a usual one with our Lord, and never employed in the Gospel of St. John, save in a connection like the present, where the Son is represented as speaking to the Father. It tends to convey the thought of an equal addressing an equal, or of someone in another person’s confidence presenting his desire to that person. It reads thus, “ I will make request,” or, “ I will present your request to the Father,” “ and He shall give you another Comforter.”

“ He shall give you another Comforter.”

The word rendered here as "Comforter" is not always so rendered. In the margin it is rendered "Advocate." We will pass over any discussion as to the change, or the interpretation of this alternative, because I do not think that it is so familiar to Christian experience as the word for which it has been substituted. "I will give you another Consoler." Even that is not the whole thought, tender and beautiful as it is. The Comforter really means the Helper, the Strengthenener, the Strong Friend; and when our Lord says, "I will give you *another* Comforter," He is referring in a manner to Himself. "I have been," He was saying in effect, "the Teacher, the Helper, the unfailing Friend. Your hearts are filled with sorrow at this very moment because I speak of going from you. I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, who shall do the same things." In our old English tongue the word Comforter did not mean exactly what it means at the present day; its content was rather larger. You will find in the best of our older literature the word "comforter" employed again and again in the sense of strengthenener. In the Latin tongue this is the sense in which it is always employed. In the Vulgate edition of the Bible it is to be

found in connections where it has been rendered into English somewhat differently. Two instances of this rise to my mind. One very familiar and precious passage is contained in the 41st chapter of Isaiah: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." Now, that is a very strong and helpful promise, is it not? The word which is rendered there, "I will strengthen," is in the Latin tongue from the word *confortare*. It is the word whence our word "comfort" was derived. Let me give you another illustration. In the beginning of the Book of Joshua, the Lord, giving the commission to the new leader of Israel, says, "I will be with thee as I was with Moses; only be thou strong and very courageous." Here again the same word is rendered in the Vulgate by *confortare*, "Be thou strengthened," "Be thou comforted."

From these instances you can see that the word taken here as Comforter has a very large and strong as well as gracious meaning. "I will give you another Comforter—a strong One—that He may be with you for ever."

This Comforter is not given to us in exchange for Christ. Christ speaks of Himself as a Paraclete. Look once more at the significance of the word *Paraclete*. It is a Greek word, and simply means a someone called to the side of someone else. And our Lord, I think, in effect is speaking of Himself at the moment as having been called to the rescue of humanity. He does not even use the word "Holy Spirit," for fear these men should mistake His meaning. He thinks of Himself as called to help; He came to teach, to rescue, to save. "And now," He promises, "I go to My Father, but I will call another to be with you for ever, not to take My place but to reveal Me to the world." "I will not leave you comfortless, I will not leave you bereaved, I will not abandon you: I will come to you." After the local presence is withdrawn, the universal presence is given. "And I will give to you another Comforter, the reinforcement of righteousness, the Spirit of Power, the Spirit of Truth."

"Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him"—it is not susceptible to His presence—"but," He says very strongly, "ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you: I come to you." Now our

Lord, speaking to men who knew Him in His bodily presence, is evidently promising a spiritual sustenance of which they already knew something. The Spirit of the Father had revealed the Christ to Peter. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto Thee, but my Father which is in Heaven." The Spirit is spoken of indifferently as the Spirit of the Father and as the Spirit of Christ. He is inseparable from either. He is promised now as a reinforcement of righteousness. He is promised as some person who is already near to these simple men. "Ye know Him," saith our Lord, "your hearts have been opened. There is to be a fuller manifestation of the Spirit that is already yours." This, then, we may take to be the plain meaning of the passage before us. We have now to try to understand the deeper content of that meaning.

I will ask you, then, to look first of all at our experience of the Holy Spirit as a Divine influence. There are many Christian people who never get beyond that point. They think of the Holy Spirit as an influence emanating from God, and though we have no need to object to that view, it is well to try in a measure to understand what that influence is.

Let us take an illustration. There is a mysterious influence in the electric light which could work mischief as well as good. No one knows what it is, though we understand a little of the modes in which it operates. We can guide it, we can employ it for our use, but electricity remains a mystery. Again, there is an operative power in the world, coming from somewhere, but invisible. The very air that we breathe is an influence—invisible, impersonal; plants and trees grow by means of it, we live because of it. The sunlight also is impersonal and invisible. Light is only visible in its effects, and without those effects we should know nothing about it. There are certain products which are the result of the combined action of light and air; the flowers exist by means of both. Now there are certain qualities of human character known as fruits of the Spirit. We speak of them as love and joy and peace. They are the effect of the power of the Spirit of God upon the soul of man—we cannot mistake them. In every holy life we see evidence of them. The Spirit of the Redeemer is reproduced in the character of all who seek to follow Him. They are IN Christ, as the trees and flowers grow in the air of heaven. Humility, gentleness, patience, quiet-

ness of spirit are no accidents, no results without a cause. Where these are Christ is—"I will not leave you comfortless; I come to you." But if Christ is the atmosphere of the soul, the Holy Spirit is as the light thereof, and it is He who takes of the things of Christ and builds them into life and character in the believing child of God, as the sunshine feeds the grass of the field.

We have no objection, then, to the thought that the Holy Spirit is a Divine influence, but we ought to go still further in our interpretation of the goodness of God in His gift to us of the Spirit, for our text speaks of Him as a Person, a Person who is called to the side of, and co-operates with, the Master in the work of saving men. Jesus speaks of summoning Him. He introduces, therefore, the idea of personality. It is in the atmosphere of personality that we are to realise what is meant by this beautiful Divine influence. Now, what do we know about that? Let me try and show you. A few days ago I went to the east end of Brighton to witness the unveiling of the portrait of Dr. James Spurgeon, who was, as you remember, the colleague of his distinguished brother. One speaker, whose words greatly appealed to me, speaking about the picture,

said: "I cannot gaze upon those features without emotion. They bring back the memory of my friend, who was to me a great influence. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was the possessor of a potent personality, but so was James Archer Spurgeon, who in a quieter fashion, perhaps, exercised an influence all his own. The effect of his presence upon me was always one of repose. If I were near him I felt that he rested me." Now, what was it that moved this speaker to such an utterance? Did he feel that the picture gave him all he wanted of the influence to which he made reference? Not at all. It but reminded him of what had been, that which was now part of himself, and it was not the form that satisfied him. What did he mean? He remembered the life. Yes; and more: remembered the very spirit of the person, that atmosphere of the man which was really doing the work, just as we cannot but do for God or the devil our work in this world by what we are, far more than by what we say, or by what we think we effect. Every man or woman brings his or her own influence. It depends upon your own acquaintance with God what is the real, though silent, influence you exercise far more effectively than anything you have set yourself consciously to do for Him.

You have sometimes been in the presence of a bad man, and you have felt possibly that there was something about him that repelled you even as you looked at him. There is a bad influence as well as a good. And, on the other hand, there is ever the potent influence of the helpless innocence of a little child. I have known men to come perturbed and worried, and in a bad spirit, into the room where a little child was and a glance at the little face was enough. The influence of the little one was not something imaginary. Sunday school teachers, it is not your mental equipment that is doing the work in the Sunday school; it is what *you* are, and I would rather have a sanctified life than I would have the cleverest man or woman in the world for the training of the children. They will remember you by the influence you cannot help exercising, by the presence of Christ you have brought to bear upon them. Again, I have often seen rough men awed by the presence of a weak woman. There is an influence of a womanly purity that is stronger than the utmost strength of evil. Have you ever known what it is to be encouraged to do right, not by being told to do so, but by being near a man stronger than yourself, whose mere presence helped you so

that you were the stronger man because he was there? There are men living to-day on the strength of other men.

We know quite well what is meant by spiritual influence when it is exerted by a human personality. What shall we say, then, about the tender potency of the Spirit of God, not something impersonal, not something imaginary, but something we can observe at work every day in this strange world of ours—a strong and wonderful living presence working on the hearts of men? Christ Himself was a Paraclete; Christ Himself exerted all these good influences. Christ Himself yet lives in the lives of men, by that Holy Spirit whom He summoned to our aid. I wish I could be eloquent enough to make you realise that this is the very truth, for there are very many who have never made trial of it. The Spirit here referred to is called by our Master the Spirit of Truth. Some know by a vital experience what this means. When they hear of the Spirit of Truth they think about that marvellous preservation of the Christian creed, concerning which so much has been said and written. They think about Church Councils in the far back ages; they think about that formal statement of a human experience of God which

has been preserved in language like this: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead." These are Christian facts that the Church has lived to witness, and we believe the Church is taught of the Holy Spirit; and that the truth has been preserved by the presence of that Spirit. Just so. But we have not done. There is a Spirit of Truth who works in and for the individual, an experience that that individual can share with no one else. Remember that, just as we are different the one from the other, so in a certain measure must our experience of life and our experience of God be our very own. When the Spirit of Truth was promised, He was promised to *you* as a man, as a woman, for *your* life. Christ spoke of the Spirit as the Agent in righteousness, regeneration, sanctification—the Spirit who gives certainty, assurance of God; the Spirit who rests upon a man for service; and that promise reached right down the ages till it found you, and it speaks to you this morning. When I think of the Spirit of

Truth, I think of the truth of the heart as well as the truth of the head. There is the Spirit that brings conviction; the Spirit that works by consolation. These and many more are aspects of the work of the Holy Ghost. You and I are each of us one of God's great facts. At the point where our lives separate we are companied and guided by the Spirit of Truth. You have some truth to receive, some truth to live, some glorious things to discover alone with God, apart with Jesus; some special service to render for which man's counsel were but in vain. Draw near, I beseech you, to the Spirit of Truth.

One never knows how near the truth one may be in a supposition of this kind. I may be addressing a man who has never yet tried—because he does not feel as if he could—to look his own life in the face. I want you to do it now. Christ has never left you. When we speak about Jesus from the pulpit, we are apt to drop into conventionalism, and to say what we are expected to say, rather than what everybody knows and feels to be pulsating, living truth. Listen. Christ has never left you; and that is the reason why you have so often been in wretchedness concerning the mistakes and failures of your life. Mr. Hugh Price

Hughes once said in a sermon something of this kind: "It is an awful thing for me to reflect that I stand to-day, as it were, in the place of Christ to you—not because He is absent, but because He is here. He does not speak for Himself; He speaks through my lips to you. The appeal to which you are listening now is Christ's appeal to those whom He has never left." This is what I am trying to demonstrate to you. Christ is near you, knows you, draws you, appeals to you. The Christ is present with you now, and—may I say it humbly?—the message which I now deliver to your heart is Christ's message. For the moment we will say that the preacher stands in the place of Christ. If your heart responds, it is because of the influence of the Divine Spirit who was summoned to the side of Jesus, and who applied the message of Christ to your soul. The sermon is preached in your own heart. The Spirit who convicts is at work within your heart even now. Look at your life faithfully, for the Spirit speaks only truth. He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The Lord our God is a consuming fire. A course of sin cannot last; it comes to an end some time, and a man reaps what he has sown. There are men whose life is a lie;

men who persist in evil ways about which they dare not think. The judgment is gone forth. Will you allow me to speak a solemn word to such as you? If you are thinking about your life as it appears to you now, in the light of the Holy Spirit, stop right where you are, and let the Spirit of conviction become to you the Spirit of regeneration, for He who declares to you the guilt of sin can deal with the soul agony. Coming to the Cross of Christ, you come in a power not your own, but of the Spirit of God. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

We have spoken of the Spirit of regeneration. "Ye must be born again," said our Divine Master. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." I recently read an utterance of the Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, to the effect that men are hungry for the knowledge, the assurance, of a Divine power outside themselves, greater than themselves, that can help and lift and save. That is the power I am preach-

ing now. I am preaching to those who feel that their life is wrong within, without, but who cannot get to God. I speak to those in whom, against their will, evil passions surge and prevail. I speak to the man who knows perfectly well the facts of his being, but who does not know how to get free. God knows that it is so, and if you are conscious of such a feeling now, it is because the Spirit of regeneration is present in your soul. The touch of God can heal you. The ray of light which reaches your eye at this moment has come many million miles to meet it: it was meant for you and no one else. The Spirit who beareth witness about Christ is the Spirit who is the agent of the new birth. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit"—born of the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because the heart is not open to receive Him.

Lastly, there is the Spirit of consolation. Is there not a truth about God which declares Him as the God of compassion? I think so. It may be that the first message of Christ is to the conscience; but there is a message for everyone who is weighed down by the anguish

of this world. Have you a great trouble which you try to forget? You seem very much left to yourself. When we speak about God we use words, words about a winsome idea; but you want comfort, sympathy, to lift you out of yourself, and give you a new start. I would like to speak, then, to you who are conscious of this absence of peace of mind. If you have a great trouble, let me tell you that it may contain God's message for you; but that it was never meant that that grisly companion should remain with you. God can heal as well as wound. He binds up the broken in heart, and giveth deliverance to the captive. Let me show you what I think God means with you.

Here lies a little sufferer on a bed of pain; the mother is watching beside the cot. The little one sleeps, not the sleep of perfect health, but of sickness and pain. You can see that the dreams are tortured. There is every now and then an expression of agony upon the little face, and the mother tenderly touches the sufferer and wakes her. What a look of relief there is upon the face of the little one! "Oh, mother!" says the child's voice, "I have been dreaming such dreadful things. I dreamt that I was right away in a lonely place, and that I called for you, and you could not hear, but now I am awake I see your face looking down

upon me." There is the consciousness of that strong, tender presence, and the comfort of the discovery is immeasurable. The little one is at rest awake who could not find rest in sleep. I think there are many of you who need to realise that God's face is looking down upon you in your torturing dreams, and yet you think that He is far away from this darksome place whence you have called to Him, and that He could not hear. There is no one can hear so well. The still small voice is calling you, and the everlasting arms are around you, for the Comforter that has been sent to you is very God. He is the gift of peace, the peace which passeth understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away. His is the touch of the hand of God, the touch which wakes you from the sleep of anguish to the joy of communion with the All-Father. His presence it is which discovers the Saviour to you, and reveals to your consciousness the abiding blessing of His love. He is the Strong One, the Comforter, the Helper. The Christ whom we preach is present by the Holy Spirit, and that Spirit was meant for you and given to you. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

V

THE SELF-ASSERTION OF JESUS

“This voice came not because of Me, but for *Λοιπ* sakes.”—John xii., 30.

OUR Lord had come up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of the Passover. He came, knowing that He was coming to passion and to death. He came in spite of the remonstrances of those who loved Him best. He stood for the moment at the height of His outward popularity, not because of what He actually taught and aimed at, but because the people thought they saw in Him the patriot chief who was to redeem Israel. Our Lord had a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. That very act brought upon Him the malevolence of the Pharisees, and ended in His trial and crucifixion. But He had a purpose in view, from which He would not draw back. The simple men who surrounded Him were not aware of this, nor could they understand what He was doing in

thus drawing the attention of His enemies publicly to Himself. Certain Greeks had accompanied the Jews to the Feast. Jerusalem at this time was a gathering place of all nations. The Jews came from all quarters of the world to keep the Passover; others came to trade with the Jews; and it was therefore a great opportunity for the Messiah to put forward His claims, and He did not shrink from thus acting. When the Greeks came to Philip, desiring to see Jesus, His answer was, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified," and He continued, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and, where I am, there shall also My servant be; if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour. Father, glorify Thy name." Then there comes the supernatural visitation, when the voice from Heaven spake, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Our Lord drew public attention to Himself at this time by the assertion of His glory with the Father, a claim which is nothing short of blasphemous if He were not what Christendom supposes Him to be. He makes service of Christ and service of God synonymous—"If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." He actually be-

comes His own Gospel, and offers Himself to the world and asks for homage to Himself. So striking is this self-assertion of Jesus that it has puzzled the best thought of the world external to Christianity from that day to this. One example I may instance is that of M. Renan, the author of the "Life of Jesus," which was so widely read not long ago. M. Renan says that either the Fourth Gospel is unhistorical, or that the Christ therein set forth had lost in the latter part of His life a little of His transparency of character, and poses as being that which He was not. But when we come to compare the Fourth Gospel with the other three, in spite of the seeming contradiction between them, there is an underlying unity apparent in the two sides of the character of Jesus.

In the first place, we note that the type of goodness which Jesus exhibited to the world was one in which lowliness and tenderness were conspicuous ingredients. The combination of these ingredients with the sternness of our Lord against sin was something entirely new to humankind. Stoicism had given its ideal to the world, an ideal in which self-respect was carried to a point that would not be tolerated nowadays. But Stoicism, with all its

admirableness, fell short of the ideal of the meek and lowly Jesus, who combined the most exquisite tenderness with the greatest firmness and even inexorableness toward wrong. But the lowliness of Christ is no pretence. The washing of the disciples' feet was an act perfectly in harmony with all the rest of His life. It was the same Saviour who took the little children up in His arms and blessed them. It was the same Saviour who was called the friend of publicans and sinners. And the same Jesus sat on the well-side talking to the woman of Samaria, who—not only a Samaritan, but a woman of abandoned character—was yet worth the while of the Master of the universe at that moment. It was the same Jesus who said to the guilty woman who was being hounded to death, "Doth no man condemn thee? Neither do I condemn thee. Go in peace, and sin no more." But why speak further about the lowliness and tenderness of Jesus? These facts stand out in relief: they form the very commonplace of Christianity to-day.

But side by side with this we are confronted with the problem of that strange self-assertion of Jesus, and here the three Synoptical Gospels and St. John's Gospel are at one.

We should remark it is perfectly clear that He meant all men to know what pretensions He put forth. He drew attention to Himself on purpose that men might understand what He thought concerning Himself, and what His witness to Himself was. If we turn back to the 6th chapter of St. John's Gospel we find these words: "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." And again in the 58th verse: "This is that bread which came down from Heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." The immediate effect of these two utterances was that some of those who, up to that time, had thought well of Jesus, went back and walked no more with Him. Then came the almost pathetic inquiry, "Will ye also go away?" and the answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." The self-assertion of Jesus at this point was not understood, even by those who knew Him best, but the winsomeness of the other side of his character compelled them to remain with Him. They felt that

Jesus spake as though He knew the very heart of the Father, and they adhered to Him.

Now, before passing from the witness of the Fourth Gospel to the claims of Jesus, I think we should say something about the supposed opposition between its account of them and that given by the other three. The Fourth Gospel has been called in question many times, and again at this hour. Who wrote it? It is impossible, some say, that John the Divine should have written it: it is evidently an expression of the later opinion of Christendom about its risen Master. The Christ of the Gospel begins to speak about Himself in the very first chapter. The prologue to the Gospel opens with a theory of the person of Christ which is in harmony with all His utterances in the same Gospel. Further than this, there can be no mistake as to the deliberateness with which that theory is taught. The three Synoptical Gospels are very simply put together, but the Fourth Gospel is different. It has a design from beginning to end; it is perfectly proportioned in all its parts; the argument concerning the person of Jesus and the consistency of His acts and utterances with it are present all through. The Gospel shows us the lowliness of Jesus, but it further and more emphatically

shows us the assertion of the personal claims of Jesus. If the Fourth Gospel, and the Fourth Gospel alone, were to put these forward, we should be at a loss what to think; but in order that we may be at no loss whatever, let me ask you to turn back to one of the Synoptical Gospels and read what is written there.

In Matt. x., 39, we read: "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." What august and staggering claims are here put forth! and what one of you, however great your saintship, dare put forth a claim approaching to that? Nay, I will dare to say that the greater your saintship, the less will you be inclined to put forth such claims. But now read in another synoptical chapter an utterance which is in similar spirit to that given in the thirteenth chapter of St. John: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." This is very beautiful and humble, but it does not stop there. "*All things are delivered unto*

Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Close together we have an assertion of the tenderest compassion and deepest humility combined with the most august claim to supremacy which we have been considering up to now. And the chapter closes with the gracious invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Thus, even the gracious invitation is a stupendous self-assertion.

There can be no mistake, then. Whichever Gospel we turn to, whichever man bears record of Jesus, they all tell the same story—that the lowliness of Jesus, the tenderness of Jesus, were blended with a claim to sinlessness, a claim to supremacy such as repelled some of those who thought best of Him, and was only accepted by those who had, as it were, nestled to His heart. And the more puzzling becomes this ideal as we try to adopt it for imitation. It has become the fashion for men of the present day to advocate the imitation of Christ.

The ideal for imitation changes a little with the progress of the centuries—(I wonder what Thomas à Kempis would say to the ideal set forth by a speaker on a Socialist platform)—but all would claim to find something in Christ worthy of imitation. John Stuart Mill, the great philosopher and unbeliever, said he could think of no better rule of action than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our lives. A few years ago a book was published by an American writer, “What would Jesus do?” It had an unprecedented sale, because of the question that was asked on the title page. It is evident that the conscience of the civilised community everywhere accepts Christ as the norm and the standard of what humanity ought to be, and pronounces Him to be worthy of imitation. Imitate Him? we dare not imitate Him. Imitate His lowliness? Yes, we can do that; but even in that there is something we cannot imitate, as I shall presently endeavour to show. Imitate His tenderness? Oh yes, we cannot go too far in that. But imitate His claim to sinlessness? or His claim to supremacy? Without blasphemy no man can do that. We are confounded when we try to account for and to combine these two

sides of the character of Christ, unless we accept His own witness to Himself.

Now, the purpose with which these claims were made begins to loom a little clearer on our vision. I take it that the self-assertion of Jesus was in line with the purpose latent in the expression of His own goodness. What do we take to be the normal goodness at which all men should aim, and by which we approve or condemn our fellows? It is that goodness, to be complete, must have its final expression in love. Here is a man who sits on the magistrate's bench, whose sentences are accepted without criticism: they are perfectly just. No man can hope to bribe him; no man can hope to deflect his judgment by personal considerations. When men speak of this man they say, He is a model of integrity: his uprightness is beyond question. Is he good? To a degree, yes, he is good. Now we will go home with him. I see that in the home circle his wife speaks to him, not as a confidential companion, but as one apart. I see that his little children keep out of his way. Not one of them must confess a weakness, for fear of heavy censure. He is hard, unsympathetic, inexorable. What do you say instantly when you are trying to estimate his character? He thinks he is good,

only he might not say so; you could trust him with your money and your reputation—he would betray neither; but he stops short somewhere; he is nearer to the Stoic than to the Saviour. Goodness is not complete except its final expression be tenderness such as that of Jesus; and, without such expression, goodness, as Christ would have understood it, cannot be said to exist.

Here we come to see something of the purpose of the Master's life. His goodness could stop short of no self-oblation. His whole life was an offering. The witness of His own words comes to our help here: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Once more: "I receive not honour from men." Now we can understand what He meant when He said, "This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes." The self-assertion of Jesus is in line with His compassion; it is part of the expression of goodness. It is in the interest of humanity and to give confidence that He so speaks. It is part of His sinless, loving ministry.

From this position we may make two further

inferences. The first is that the lowliness of Christ is of incomplete service to men as a gospel without the proclamation of His sinlessness. And the second is, that the tenderness of Jesus, without His supremacy, fails in reaching to the needs of men.

Take the first of these propositions, and let us speak about the lowliness of Jesus. We have but to refer to the simple and beautiful stories which are told best of all, perhaps, in the 15th chapter of St. Luke. The late Professor Bruce opines that that chapter was a sermon, and was preached to an audience of publicans and sinners gathered in Matthew's house. Jesus proclaimed the gracious invitation of God as if it were His own, and told the story of the prodigal who took the portion of goods that was his and went into the far country, where, after coming to want and misery, he thought of his father, and made up his mind to return. "And when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him," and brought him home with rejoicing. Think of the tenderness of that message, combined with the lowliness of the Messenger, who thus addressed an audience of outcasts. But here is a remarkable thing. Not only was Jesus infinitely lowly and

tender, but He *said so*. Now, if you find a humble man who says he is humble, you are apt to deny his humility. "I am meek and lowly in heart," said Jesus. Our humility at its best contains something of contrition. All our excellence is derived, and we know it. If there is good in us, it comes from God. I remember an expression used once by one who is a bishop to-day; and if that be the expression of his inmost life, it is well for the Church of God. Some one had just been reminding him of an act of goodness which he had performed. He said, "Any good I have ever been able to do is of the unearned mercy of God." That is true humility. We feel that the merit is not ours, but God's. All human excellence is derived, and the note of contrition runs throughout it. But the humility of Jesus is not of such an order. It partakes of it, but it goes beyond it. Jesus in His humility knew that He was supreme over all men in excellence. His goodness had no flaw. There was no room for contrition. He was the Lamb without blemish and without spot. Jesus was the only one who could carry such a claim, and carry it with meekness. Jesus, who stood at the very heart of things, whose character was harmonious and radiant with holiness derived

from the Heaven of Heavens, held all this in trust for humanity. He could, without being self-regarding, without looking to His reputation, or thinking of what was due to Himself, support the consciousness of an excellence which is transferred from Him to those saints of God who are trying to follow Him to-day.

Such is the humility of Jesus, and even when we try to approach it we recognise that our very power of being humble is derived from Him. Oh, brethren, when we try to look through the ranks of men for one who approximates to our ideal of Jesus we can easily read the uniqueness of His humility by our difficulty in finding one. The late Henry Drummond was conspicuous for being a hearer of spiritual griefs. Drummond's very lowliness and tenderness were the reason. You know the difficulty to-day in finding such another as Drummond. Such men are indeed hard to discover. But the moment we think about Jesus the heart cries: "Oh that He were here! I could tell Him!" Just as the Magdalene went to His feet, so some of us—not only weak women, but strong men—would do to-day if Jesus stood here, and we could touch Him with our hands. We would tell the whole story of grief and disappointment and humiliation and failure and

sin, and we should know that He would listen, listen as though there were no other such story in the wide world. We value his lowliness as a gateway to God. Jesus would listen. He has no place where He reserves something from humanity. His heart is open at all times to receive the griefs that humanity has to bring. But if He could give us no more than sympathy, where then were the value of Jesus? His lowliness leads us unto His sinlessness, and He alone—not like Drummond, not like Moody, not like Spurgeon, not like any saint of God that ever hears our story—is the only one who has the right to forgive. “Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” was the challenge of the Saviour to the hostile Jewish world, and how thankful we are to-day to think that He is present to heal and to succour and to save all men who come to Him in penitence and self-despair. We welcome the lowliness, we rejoice in the sinlessness. Oh, that self-assertion of Jesus, and the confidence it brings!

And, lastly, I have said that we could not speak in the same terms of the tenderness of Jesus if we did not think of His kingship. In this strange world of ours there is very much kindness though but very little gratitude. Sometimes we meet with an instance of hero-

ism which teaches us a truth about kindness which otherwise we might miss. It is this: there is an ingredient of strength in all tenderness. It is full of surprises. Here is a public man who has a host of enemies as well as a host of friends. When he has some evil to denounce he does it with vigour; and men hate him. "What a character," they say; "too rugged, too extreme, too self-assertive!" We will watch beside him and observe how tender he is to that little child. The strong man is led about by the hand of a baby. Death enters the home, and the little one is snatched away. See how the great heart is broken with grief, and how well the others in the home understand. They can read his real nature. The tenderness that is written there is a tenderness allied with strength. His fidelity has been tested beyond doubt. There are two sides to that man's nature, and they are not inconsistent—rather the contrary. But now let us take another example, somewhat different. Here is a mother whose son is in disgrace. The world frowns upon him. Men have ceased to believe in him, and with only too good reason. Perhaps the mother cannot believe in him either; but she won't leave him. She is close beside him; her eyes are closed to his defects.

She will fight for him against the hostility of society. She will admit nothing against his better nature, in spite of the misgivings that are in her heart. She will stand by this disgraced outcast and bear his burden for him. Oh, the strength of a love like that! Or again, look at that young girl who is the breadwinner of the family. She says nothing about the hardships she has to undergo. When she returns in the evening, jarred and hurt by the unkindnesses of the day, she just keeps the story to herself, and does not tell it to the home circle for fear of how it will sound to the invalid who is so helpless. There are marvellous stories in the world of the strength that is latent in all tenderness. Love makes strong. And I will say that no man or woman has ever been capable of a deed of self-sacrifice, but they were the stronger for it. There is strength latent in all tenderness, which is a flash, as it were, of the nature of God.

We draw near to Jesus now with this thought in our minds. Human strength may go far, but it cannot insure our well-being, our final victory over the things within and without, which our imperfect nature has most cause to dread. But if Jesus' witness to Himself were

true, if He were not mistaken, if those august claims that He put forth have stood the test of time, and are true to-day; if the Fourth Gospel and the other three unite in the same testimony concerning Him who was before the ages, to whom the world belongs; then all is well with you and me. We want to approach Him with our story of the past. We have not done as we should; we have come far short of what we intended; and we pour our prayer into the ear of some One whom Christendom affirms to be Jesus. There is no story that is not already known to Him, no part of our being that is not already open to Him. When you come with your troubles, it is to the Lord of Life and Death. If that be not true, Oh, it were better far that mankind had never heard the story—the sorrow of it would be too fearful! But there is no doubt about it. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Lest we should mistake, He said: “If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Precious truth! for it gives us possession of the Infinite. “All things are yours; this was for your sakes.”

“ All things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours ; and ye are Christ’s ; and Christ is God’s.”

VI

GOD'S PERFECTING OF LIFE.

“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.”
—Ps. cxxxviii., 8.

OUR text is taken from one of the captivity Psalms. Israel is rejoicing in her deliverance from a long stage of political thralldom. She speaks through the voice of the Psalmist, and this is her utterance of thanksgiving to God. At the same time, it is a recognition of the oneness of the people of Israel in God. Israel is homeless; her home has to be re-made. She is delivered from one danger, but others confront her. Her problems are by no means over; her difficulties have only just begun. Nevertheless, her song is one of triumph: what God hath begun, that He will also complete. “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.”

This text is one peculiarly suitable to an audience gathered together at the beginning

of the twentieth century. For we seek, with perhaps a larger vision than was ever given to ancient Israel, the essential truth which it declares. None of us can mistake what we may call the intellectual and spiritual climate of the day in which we live. And if we are to be faithful ministers of Christ, it is requisite that we should obey His own injunction, and learn to read and to interpret the signs of the times.

I take it that the century which has just closed—that wonderful century—has given to us many good things, as well as many others of more doubtful importance. And one of the things which has become a mental possession of our own day is the new emphasis which has been placed upon the solidarity of the race. We see now, as perfectly as Israel ever did, perhaps more perfectly even than the inspired Psalmist, the solidarity of man with man, and of all with God. The day of a selfish and blatant individualism is gone by; and in making that remark I speak from the point of view of a minister of Christ, and not of one whose plan and purpose it is to declare news about social emancipation. We just know this—and cannot escape from knowing it—that “no

man liveth to himself." The individual realises himself in society, and apart from society his individuality is naught. Personality is only discovered in relations; and for us to say, in the words of the Psalmist, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," is the same thing as to say, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth man." For the one unescapable reality of all human life is God!

Nor can we stop here. One note that has been struck, I think, with considerable power in the years that are just over, is that of the essential unity of all existence. A certain great scientist, speaking of an older theology than that perhaps in which you and I were trained, characterised it as not only being somewhat selfish, but he says—whether rightly or wrongly—that it was somewhat "conceited." "We have discovered," he says, "that the world transcends the interests of humanity. Whereas once we spoke of men as the crown of creation, that for the sake of which all else exists, now we have come to discover that we are each of us, and humanity as a whole, but a very puny factor in the life of the universe. If there be a purpose in it all,

it is one which transcends the interests of humanity, yet still remains an ordered whole."

Once more, therefore, we discover not only the solidarity of man with nature, and all with God; but we discover that the universe is one. Yes; in every relationship with which we are familiar, examined in all senses and directions, we cannot but realise that, for good or for evil, the universe is one. The garment of nature is woven seamless throughout. We are related and inter-related, not only one to the other, but to the whole mysterious existence of which we form a part. Then the question of questions necessarily becomes: Is there a soul thereof? And we who are trying to read the signs of the times ought to be ready with our evangel to meet what I believe, in the providence of God, has been a created question, namely, Is there a soul to this whole of mysterious existence of which we ourselves are a part? What is at the heart of things? Of what kind is He who reigns? Of what kind is He in whom our being and our interests are co-ordained? And there can be no answer to that question sufficient for the hour outside the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are not only ministers of Christ, but I pray

you to remember that we are stewards of the mysteries of God.

Here it is that revealed religion comes in with its note of good confidence and high hope. Apart from Christ, what answer is there to the riddle of existence? And I think here one may say, without being misunderstood, that for moral and spiritual import no sufficient stress has been placed upon what Christendom has come to regard as the cosmical significance of Christ. Jesus spake not only to the individual conscience and heart, but speaks to those who are rooted and grounded in Him to-day, in such terms as these: God has never ceased to reign; and that expression of the life of God which alone has value for a noble soul, and which can satisfy the highest cravings of the human spirit, is revealed in Jesus Christ. It is Christ who reigns and in whom creation is unified. And the revelation comes not first, mind you, to the intellect; it comes first to the conscience, it grips the heart. The cosmical significance of Christ is that which gives to us sweet confidence and high hope, when we reflect upon the fundamental questions of our life and destiny. For if the same Jesus who taught upon the hill-side of Galilee in the long ago; who

sat upon the well of Samaria—speaking to one of abandoned character, an outcast; the Jesus of the home at Bethany; the Jesus who wept by Lazarus' grave; the Jesus who healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead: if that same Jesus be seated upon the Throne of the Universe—then all is well! And it is, it seems to me, at the present day a serious omission from much of our pulpit teaching, that we do not press to the very front the ground of our confidence that things cannot be wrong, that God has never ceased to reign—because all authority is committed, in Heaven and on earth, to the Christ whom we adore! “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.”

If we press this truth too far, then we are in danger perhaps of weakening the sense of moral responsibility. Here again one touches upon a characteristic of our own day. Christian brethren, this is a time of comparative moral apathy. These periods seem to come in cycles. The great wave of Puritan intensity of two centuries ago no sooner spent itself than there came a time of wild reaction, when men lived for the moment, and in the name of humanism perpetrated false thoughts and actions. Once more we have entered upon a

period of moral apathy. Let us watch it; let us learn to discern its characteristics. Men are not in earnest now very much about anything; neither in secular nor in sacred things can you, without much labour and self-sacrifice, work up any enthusiasm. There is an absence of the willingness to take responsibility, which willingness characterised those who have left us the spiritual heritage that we enjoy to-day. Men are willing to let things slide. Anybody else may carry the cross, so long as we are not troubled by it.

Again, there is a strange and regrettable weakening of the sense of sin. Preachers who ignore that fact are not faithful to the evangel which has been committed to them as a trust from God. And sometimes it has seemed to me as if we were more in earnest to comfort and reassure humanity than we are to press home upon sinners their responsibility to the Judge of all the earth, whose sternness is not the less real because He is also the meek and lowly Jesus. This weakening of the sense of sin is due, in part, to the weakening of the note of authority in our evangel. Let us never cease to preach the terrors of the Lord; for to preach the sternness of God is necessary, if we are preaching rightly the benevolence of

God. Because whom He loves He will not spare; and to understate His sternness because of His love is wrong, for the two can never be considered apart. The Lord our God is a consuming fire. He will perfect that which concerneth man, even though He triumph at his cost.

In this regard we are sometimes accused, and rightly accused, perhaps, of making forgiveness too easy. In a remarkable article written in the *British Weekly* by Dr. Robertson Nicoll concerning "Scoundrelism," he said in substance this: That Christian preachers, in common with many other teachers of to-day, are in danger of prophesying smooth things, and sprinkling the way of life with rose water. We have lost the note of authority, somehow, in our pulpit preaching. Men criticise us, which ought not to be possible; we ought to challenge men. And the writer goes on to say that it seems as though, by the very weakening of our evangel, we are contributing to the weakening of the sense of sin, to which reference has been already made. And he asks the questions, What can repentance do? What, also, can it not do? His conclusion seems to be, Though repentance can bring the sinner back to God, and secure the blending

of the spirit of the penitent with the spirit of the Maker and the Judge, yet it never can remit the penalty of sin. He who goes to the far country very seldom comes back; and when he comes back, he cannot find the old home as he left it. Life is so stern, that it ought never to be played with. "God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Not something else," as Robertson, of Brighton, has said, "but just that."

In reading that article, I felt how very necessary it was that we should be recalled to the significance of the Gospel we preach. It is too solemn for us to trifle with it. But at the same time I felt that the writer had, in emphasising a solemn truth, failed to see—or, at any rate, failed to say—something which has been entrusted to every preacher of the Gospel to say. What can repentance do? Much. It can bring the sinner back to God. What can it not do? It cannot remit penalty? Yes, it can, and does. It is a strange fact that at the very moment when we have failed to make clear to men the sinfulness of sin, and have made forgiveness too easy, the world has been reminding us that there is no such thing as forgiveness at all. That, I take it, is the ordinary experience of sinful man. To every

man, or to most men, shall I say, forgiveness is associated in some degree with some remission of the penalty of wrongdoing. The two are not one; but men feel about them as though they were. Forgiveness seems unreal, except it be accompanied by an evangel which says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Hear what society says concerning this. Here, it may be, is a man who had sinned against the laws of his country. He once occupied a high position in the esteem of the society in which he had been born. He is placed inside the prison-house: society execrates him, and, it may be, complains that the sentence was not long enough, and talks about the time when he will come out. He will never come out. Once the door is closed, society has closed it for ever. There is no more going back, there is no more taking up the threads of forfeited opportunity. That which is done can never be undone. All through life that sinner will be shadowed by the wrong that he committed in the hour of sinful delirium. There is no forgiveness in society.

And there is no forgiveness in nature. Men

know it; and when we play with the facts of life in the pulpit, they feel that our message is unreal. Here comes a drunkard to you—listening to your evangel, and trying to take hope therefrom. And the thought in his mind—whether he presents it to you or not—is this, as he holds up his trembling hands: “Can aught give me back the virile manhood I have forfeited—that strength of constitution which seems gone for ever? And if not, where can the forgiveness of God come?” If God forgives, can God restore? Can that which has been be as though it has never been? For this is the cry of every man who has become a victim to his own sinful passion.

Here is another—though I do not wish to weary you with a multiplication of instances: Here is a man who has lived to the flesh, and of the flesh reaped corruption. This lustful one has bequeathed a dread heritage to his children. And as he listens to the sound of the Gospel of Jesus, which rings in his ear as a message of sweetness, he thinks to himself: “How can that which hath been done be undone by this Gospel that sounds so sweet, though so unreal? Can God give me back again the lives of my children which I have shattered? Can God restore to me that oppor-

tunity—not for my own sake do I ask it—that I have thrown away? Alas, no!

The tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me."

The penalty of sin seems to remain. No—the world will not believe in forgiveness.

Now, the answer to the very real difficulty thus created appears to me to be that which we read about in the 55th chapter of Isaiah—the transmutation of the curse. There is no going back, because there is something better further on. The curse becomes the cross. Every saint of God has to carry his. And I would say to the poor drunkard who comes to me with his shaking hands: Brother, God in His mercy has ordained that you carry your cross. It was self-imposed in the first instance. You must carry it for His sake now. And, brother, we are just alike, you and I, for I must carry mine, and all children of the Lord must carry theirs. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

Repentance, if it be true, has no note of selfishness in it; and your palsied one would say, "Right, and just, and true are the ways of the Lord. I take this penalty as a disci-

pline to be received, as that which God has given me." If not this cross, then some other; and for all who love Him, God turns the penalties of sin from a curse into a blessing. The stains become the stigmata; the stripes of the Lord become the marks of the Lord Jesus. The evangel is there. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

Once more. It seems as though the Gospel contained in this text extends to the ulterior consequences of human sin. Oh, if we could but sin to ourselves, and ourselves bear the cost! But the innocent suffer for the guilty; those who love, frequently suffer more than the sinner himself. It is because of the solidarity of the race, to which reference has just been made, that no man liveth to himself, that the consequences of wrongdoing are felt far beyond the region of the personality of him who commits the wrong. Here is a problem. A man comes to himself; it is not the thought of repentance, or of what he himself may bear, that troubles him; it is the thought of that which he can never overtake which is working its effect in the lives of other men. Is there an evangel for that? I think there is, and it is to be found in my text. To him who comes in faith to God, there is a blessed future of

hope promised. Yes: it is God who takes charge of the whole of the circumstances, and of the whole circumference of effect also in which you are concerned, and "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth you."

As I stood and looked out into the most beautiful street in the world—Princes Street, Edinburgh—and watched the smoke from a hundred chimneys ascending into the heavens above, and all the hurrying throng below, the thought crossed my mind: Is this foul smoke, which is penetrating the atmosphere, to accumulate and to increase till the whole is poisoned and rendered unfit for human beings to breathe? And then there came the obvious and commonsense fact that even as it ascends it is being transmuted, and it will return to-morrow as something else than that which was sent away. The sewage passing under our feet away out to the great ocean does not go there to be destroyed, but to be transformed; and it will come back again to refresh this land in rain. These fleecy white clouds above us in the heavens—whence came they? From many a marsh, from many a stagnant pool, from many a reeking slum. There they are—purified, and now suspended in the firmament of God.

We are giving out every day by what we are, as well as by what we do, facts which are affecting other lives, and we cannot recall them. The moment for that has gone by directly the sin is committed. Yes; we cause the suffering and we do the harm. Yet God uses both. He reigns. He has never abdicated. Our life is in His charge. And the moment thought becomes volition in any man, and passes into act, that moment it is swallowed up like something in the atmosphere—in the mighty designs of God. Strive as you may, you cannot defeat Him. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Keep ever humble, penitent one. Turn to what you can do. Cease to mourn for what you cannot do. Think of what the dying Arthur says in “The Idylls of the King:”

I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure.

“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.”

All the past things are past and over;
The tasks are done and the tears are shed.
Yesterday's errors let yesterday cover;
Yesterday's wounds which smarted and bled
Are healed with the healing which God has shed.

Let them go, for you cannot relieve them—

Cannot undo, and cannot atone.

God, in His mercy, receive and forgive them.

Only the new days are our own;

To-day is ours, and to-day alone.

Again, the thought full of significance and helpfulness comes to us from this text, that for all to whom self-expression in this life has been denied, there is a Divine truth to comfort them: "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." In a congregation gathered from amongst serious-thinking men, many being true servants of God, there must be many who know what it is to hear the sad music of humanity. I think scarcely any man can take life and duty seriously without sometimes feeling the pressure of sadness—upon what he thinks, as well as upon what he says. You cannot help it. Live faithfully unto God, and though your optimism be undoubted, always therein you must discern, and must possess, and must declare, the note of solemnity. It is because the heart of man is evil continually, that deep down we discern the sad music of humanity. You have been trying to live out your life; sometimes you failed to do what you set yourself to do, sometimes it seemed as though you were misunderstood in the best

effort that you put forth. Consecration to God does not necessarily mean that you are to be understood of your fellows in this world. You have tried to do something for God. Mr. Ruskin tells us that no well-meant effort, put forward with consecrated motive, can ever fail. Sometimes it seems as if it has failed. The best attempted actions, carried out with most honest purpose, sometimes seem to do more harm than good.

For the comfort of the people of God let us hear His message upon such a suggestion as this—"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Once in a village in Germany—so I have been told—there lived a man of genius, who built for the village church an organ, wherewith public worship was to be conducted. But he could not give it voice. Years went by and he became the laughing-stock of the community. He could not bring harmony forth from the instrument that he had himself created. It was latent and slumbered there, and needed a master-hand to awaken it. But one day there came the great musician, Sebastian Bach, to that township, and the people flocked to hear him. And timidly amongst the rest approached this man whom the people had for years laughed at. And he

entreated Bach, "Master, lay your hands upon the keys of my instrument, and see if the harmony be there." And when Bach complied, then that to which utterance had seemed denied suddenly gave forth melody so sweet that not only was the poor old man vindicated, but—what was a greater matter to him—his very soul leaped up in thankfulness to God. He had now expressed himself, and it was for this he had been living those many years past. Ah, and sometimes it seems to us as if our Lord delayeth His coming. All workers with Christ know what it is to go into Gethsemane with the Master, for all noble souls are lonely sometimes. Our faith is dim, and we turn to the Old Book for the comfort which we are entitled to receive. Yes, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

Live truly unto God: wait for that better day, that day of His appearing, when the Sun of Righteousness shall shine round about you. Then all done faithfully unto God shall stand as the great purpose He has purposed; and Christ will interpret that which men have failed to read. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

Any church to live must be a missionary church. Every member must be a missionary.

This is what we have to take to the world—and no faltering note this!—Christ crucified, as the Lord of life and death. I would put no bound to the Saviourhood of Christ. Christ is our Saviour from everything which humanity has cause to dread, and our Saviour to everything for which humanity ought to hope. Go with the blessing of God upon you, for power must come to the message, as you lay it alongside human need: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.”

VII

THE HUMANITY OF GOD

“Thomas answered and said unto Him, ‘My Lord and my God.’”—John xx., 28.

You will hardly need to be reminded of the circumstances under which these words were first spoken. This is the place in the New Testament where the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ is first and plainly affirmed. If the apostle’s account is true, and I believe every syllable of it is, this is the first time in the history of the world when the experience of a loving disciple discovered the humanity of God. Thomas was privileged, doubter though he was, to fix the faith of Christendom in the sentence which is our text—“My Lord and my God.” All creeds begin in experience, and every man has his creed, even when he says he has not. As is your experience, so is your creed. The mere utterance of a sentence, another man’s sentence, though you may call it your creed, is not your creed unless it is a part

of your life. How much Thomas meant by his utterance one cannot say, but that ejaculation which sprang from a loving heart, from a delighted and devout soul, "My Lord and my God," was the affirmation of an experience which, afterwards put into a creed, has helped to form and fashion thousands of lives, and to supply the inspiration for a myriad noble characters. The Deity of Jesus stands as the first article of the Christian faith if we are to believe in a Divine deliverer at all. I am well aware that many persons, especially, perhaps, young people, have very great difficulty in believing in the Divinity of Christ, as it is called. I am going to try to show you that you believe it already, and that as you live nobly you are sure to believe it more. First, let me state your difficulty.

One has often heard men say:

How much simpler your Christianity would be if you were to preach your human master and leave supernaturalism out of your Gospel. We admit that Christ was a good man; we will go further and say, He is the best Man that ever lived, the pattern and example of humanity for all time. But don't ask us to believe that He was God; that is a strain upon credulity. It has nothing to do with

the ethic of Christianity, and, in fact, helps to weaken it.

I have heard others say:

Don't ask me to believe in the Divinity of Christ, because you push Him away from me when you do that, and I want Him to come near. If I can only say to myself, Christ is a man, like myself, believing in Him and following Him becomes simpler for me. But when you say He is God, He is at an impossible distance from me at once, and when you speak of a High Priest, touched with the feeling of my infirmities, and tempted in all points, like as I am, you speak in an unknown tongue. That Jesus does not help me half so much as the Jesus that stands down beside me and lives my life.

A third form in which that difficulty is stated is this:

How are we to understand this double Christ who, on every page of the New Testament, is presented as our ideal and example, Master and Lord? Now He is praying to the Father, and He says, "My Father," and, while He says it, He looks up as we do to my God and your God. And now He hangs on Calvary there is wrung from Him the cry of seeming despair that has been wrung from

human souls before and since—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yet you say He was God—God suffering, God in agony, God cry to God. How can it be? You ask me to believe an impossible thing—a dual nature and a dual consciousness. Don't put stumbling-blocks for the weak. Say straight out, you preachers, Jesus was man and have done with it, and then, in His struggles and in His triumphs, I feel that I have a part.

Have I stated your difficulty fairly and frankly? I will meet you with my answer. It is that Jesus as God—my God, Very God of Very God. I could not do without Him. Give me the Christ or I have no Father; and without the Christ the hope of poor humanity is gone. Mr. Gladstone said in the evening of his life, in answer to a question from a correspondent, "All I think, and all I write, and all I hope, is based upon the Divinity of our Lord—that one central hope for our poor wayward race."

There is the assertion then. I take my stand with Thomas, and speak through his lips when I say, "My Lord and My God." Now for that demonstration, if demonstration can be found. Remember this: All religious faith that is worthy of the name is the re-

sultant in experience of a number of propositions which, taken separately, would be unconvincing, but taken in the mass are overwhelming in their power of producing conviction. So it is with this first tenet of the Christian faith—the Godhead of Jesus Christ.

Let me clear a preliminary difficulty out of your way. You are accustomed to think and speak of humanity and divinity as though they were two different things. They are not; they are one thing and indivisible. In Christ there were not two natures, but one. When we say two, we speak as men and with men's limitation. The humanity of Christ was His divinity, and when you have gathered all humanity together, you have got Deity, not two things, but one thing. There is no line between man and God, looking downwards; there is a distinct line between man and God, looking upwards. God is all that you are, and infinitely more. He lives more of your life than you live yourself. He knows every thought before it is born, and if you separate yourself from Him in thought He will follow you with His chastisement, because He cannot rid Himself of that part of His life which is in you. Humanity and divinity are insepara-

ble, and that consciousness of Deity covers all that is human.

Now, can you suppose that you know very much about Deity when you have said this? All that you know about Deity is human, every bit of it. We speak about the God who is declared in the mountain and in the flood, the God who speaks by nature, and so on; but Henry Drummond notwithstanding, I would say with Mr. Dallinger, that great Wesleyan, "You will read no God in Nature except that God you take to Nature. It is in humanity that you find Him. Nature may confirm, she cannot affirm, what you know about God. No, it is in humanity, humanity at its best, that you must read what you know about God.

I am not afraid of taking you to the Gospel for the answer. All men who believe in God got Him from Christ. Unitarian, Trinitarian, if you have a worthy notion of your Father in heaven, you took it from Jesus of Nazareth; He brought it to the world; He never took it away. Humanity at its highest has given us God; and yet I need not shrink from saying, even in Jesus you have not all there is of God. Infinitely far beyond His being is that fathomless abyss which is still the Father, and Jesus looked up at the Father,

infinite in power, majesty, and glory, when He said, "My God," but when I look up at the Father, I have to look at Him through the form of Jesus Christ, and say, "You are Lord and God to me; I cannot see the Father's face except as I look on you.

Now, let us come a little closer still to demonstration. Admitting that humanity is part of the life of God, and must be—for I do not wish to be unduly metaphysical, and I hope I am speaking in the language of common life—admitting that humanity and divinity are one, the measure of humanity is how much of divinity it can contain. There is not a man, be he never so foolish and never so bad, but contains some divinity. The divine spark within you which makes you man and marks you man, is God. The deepest self in every man is God. The rest may be beast—never mind, that is God which is most truly you. And you don't stand by yourself. All humanity is related. If you are a bad man, I am a sufferer because of it; if you have done something good I am a beneficiary. If you are living a true life, all the community feels the result. No man liveth to himself. We are bound together by invisible bonds that the worst of us cannot break and the strongest

cannot transcend. Now, is there one being anywhere that holds us all. We are all together, we cannot escape that, and we don't want to. It is just an ordinary fact, an ordinary experience. You are bound to your fellows. The whole life of humanity is in some sort centered in you. Is there any being anywhere, is there any soul, in earth or heaven or both, that holds us all? I think I have found Him? I find Him here. The question was never asked about anybody else in the history of the world, Is He man or is He God? Here is a soul that holds yours, a life that covers yours. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. Jesus Christ is the Man of men, the Man to whom the rest look up, and something more than that, the Man Whose life is the spring and the source of all that is human. "Before Abraham was," he said of Himself, "I am." I put that into a sentence: Jesus Christ is just that side of the nature of God in which the humanity lies.

But we can go further still. Jesus Christ becomes a pledge and guarantee of infinite God for the salvation of men. Not only is He God, and must be God, because His life is behind and above yours, and is the source of all that is worthiest to live in yours; but Jesus

Christ brings infinite God into finite human life. Every noble thought you have, every worthy deed you do, has come from farthest heaven, and has come through the life of Jesus Christ. Moreover, great may be your iniquity, intractable may be your sin, but Jesus Christ, Very God of Very God, has shown Himself sufficient for your sin. Were it only for that, I would preach the Sinless Man, who rescues sinful men, and in the humanity of my Lord, the true humanity by which He takes His place by my side, I read the infinity, the eternity, the holiness of Deity; and so I am saved by the Cross of Christ.

Now, may I quit this long and somewhat abstract discussion, and come to what I think will clear up the difficulty, if any remains, by a figure drawn from human experience? Last Sunday morning, as I stood face to face with my own congregation, the sight of a lady there reminded me of a story she had told me of an incident that came under her observation in visiting the sick in Brighton. She said she had called upon a poor woman, an ignorant woman, a hard-working toiler, and one of those patient souls who never seem to have a thought for themselves, but who live for other people all their days. As she was

dying she was anxious about her children. The visitor tried to interest her in her own salvation, but it could not be done; she had not time to listen, she was so anxious about her children, what was to become of them now that the mother who had earned the few pence that kept them from penury was passing away? The visitor told her about Jesus and about God, and said the love of God was sufficient for her babes. What do you suppose was the reply of the dying woman? She said, "I don't believe in God; I have never found that God the Father gave me much help in my struggle to live; I am afraid of Him, but I believe in Jesus, and I think if He were here I could tell Him all my troubles, and I am sure He would answer and help me." You will be surprised, doubtless, to think that such an utterance could ever have been made, that anybody anywhere could have separated between Jesus and God. She talked of them both as though they were alive, and then said, "I don't believe in God, and cannot trust Him, but if Jesus were here—if Jesus were here!" The truth is that human nature spoke out there in a demand whose urgency will never be lessened unless you bring God to the rescue of human sorrow when you breathe the

name of Jesus. She spoke what we all feel. Jesus pledged the great heart of God when He said, "My Father and your Father: I will pray the Father for you, and He shall send you another comforter;" "I and My Father are one." When you have seen Him, you have seen all you need to know of God, you have penetrated to that last place in His nature. Nature is only the outwork of God; Jesus gives us the very heart of the Father.

One more, and it may be a little personal, but let it pass. The other day, a little person in my house came home to tell me of a strange thing she had seen on a placard about her father. She did not say so, she said "about the minister of the City Temple." I have been extremely careful not to read a single word anywhere else than on the placard about that personality within the last few weeks. The little one told me again and again of what she had seen here and seen there. I said, "Well, this is a person that you don't seem to know anything about; he has so many virtues, so many peculiarities, and so many accomplishments, and, to judge by the pencilings and the reproduced presentments here and there, he is a person you have never seen." I said to her, "I wonder who he is?" She

put both her arms around my neck, as she said, "He is my Father!" And I look up to farthest heaven, and I see that not a planet stirs a hair's-breadth from its course, and I am lost in the immensity of the conception, and I am afraid as I think of the machinery, and I come down to earth, and I bend over a broken heart, and I hear a man cry, "God be merciful to me!" I think of that poor atom of humanity, and I think of that pathless infinity over against it, and then I remember and say, my Jesus is the Master and the Lord, the King of Lords, and the friend of the sorrowful all the same.

Let us try to put ourselves into the very imagination of Thomas, and see how he thought and felt. Thomas had come to somebody that he thought had brought new truth to the world. "Is not this a King?" He was telling his friends, "This man that I have just found is going to grasp the scepter of the Cæsars, and when He has got it, He will rule over such a kingdom as the world has never seen!" But, in a while, Thomas and his friends forgot the king as they sat listening open-mouthed to One who spake as never man spake. Into the very upper room these men carried their little ambitions and their

hopes to see their Master crowned with a crown of gold. Oh, but when they saw Him crowned with a crown of thorns it seemed as though all their hopes were overwhelmed, and they had to begin at the beginning again, and look for another than this, this poor suffering One who was dying on Calvary, both hands nailed to the tree; and they could not do it; they found they loved Him. And it was because Thomas's heart was breaking at the news that He was dead, murdered by those He had tried to save, that in his despair he said, "I saw Him! I saw Him die; I cannot believe He will ever live again." "My Lord" he called Him; and "Lord" here means nothing but Master; I might call you Lord, and mean nothing more than Thomas meant when he said "Lord" to Jesus. "My Master has gone; He will never come back. I saw Him die. Except I see in His hands the prints of the nails, and put my finger on the print of the nails, and thrust my hand where I saw the spear go, I will not believe." Then he looked up and saw Him. His Master spoke and said, "Put your finger on the print of the nails, thrust your hand into my side, Thomas." Thomas did not wait to do either, but he cried out in a joy that there was no sup-

pressing, and in a faith which had just been sorrow, and recalled a love which had been his whole life, as he thought about the Jesus who told him of the Father. "He has come back! He is something more than He was before to me. How is it I never saw it? Why was it I never saw it? My Lord and My God!" He had learned the humanity of God in the love that was drawn out of him in spite of himself to the human Jesus; and now they saw Him as He was, the Lord of life and glory, the Soul of humanity, the Friend of the lost, and the Deliverer of all who call unto Him; they found that the grave could not hold Him. When Thomas and those with him cried out, "My Lord and my God," a new hour of triumph had dawned for humanity, and it is shining to-day.

Put your difficulties into the pit. Away with them! For Jesus has given you God. Don't deprive your life of anything that would help to make it grand and good. You need a Saviour, whether you have ever recognised it or not, and you need a heavenly friend, such as He was and is; and without Him there is none other. I summon you to Thomas's creed and Thomas's Lord, saying with the voice of the doubter, "My Lord and my

God," and He will never fail you all the days of life. Christ is our Saviour from everything which humanity has cause to dread, and our Saviour to everything for which humanity ought to hope.

I hope to see my Pilot face to face,
When I have crossed the bar.

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Campbell, R. J.

The keys of the kingdom

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